MARVEL
FABIAN NICIEZA
DAN JURGENS
SCOTT HANNA
ALEX SINCLAIR
X-MEN LEGENDS #10
JURGENS
HANNA
INC

WELCOME TO AN EVENING OF FINE DINING AND FINER CONVERSATION.
WELCOME TO A MEETING OF...
NATHANIEL ESSEX. MR. SINISTER. A MUTATED HUMAN CONSIDERED TO BE HISTORY'S GREATEST GENETICIST.
...THE EIGHTH CIRCLE!
A TALE OF THE X-MEN BROUGHT TO YOU BY
FABIAN NICIEZA & DAN JURGENS
WRITER PENCILER
SCOTT HANNA - INKER ALEX SINCLAIR - COLOR ARTIST
VC's JOE CARAMAGNA - LETTERER
JURGENS/HANNA/SINCLAIR - COVER
CREEES LEE & NEERAJ MENON - VARIANT COVER
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MARK BASSO - EDITOR
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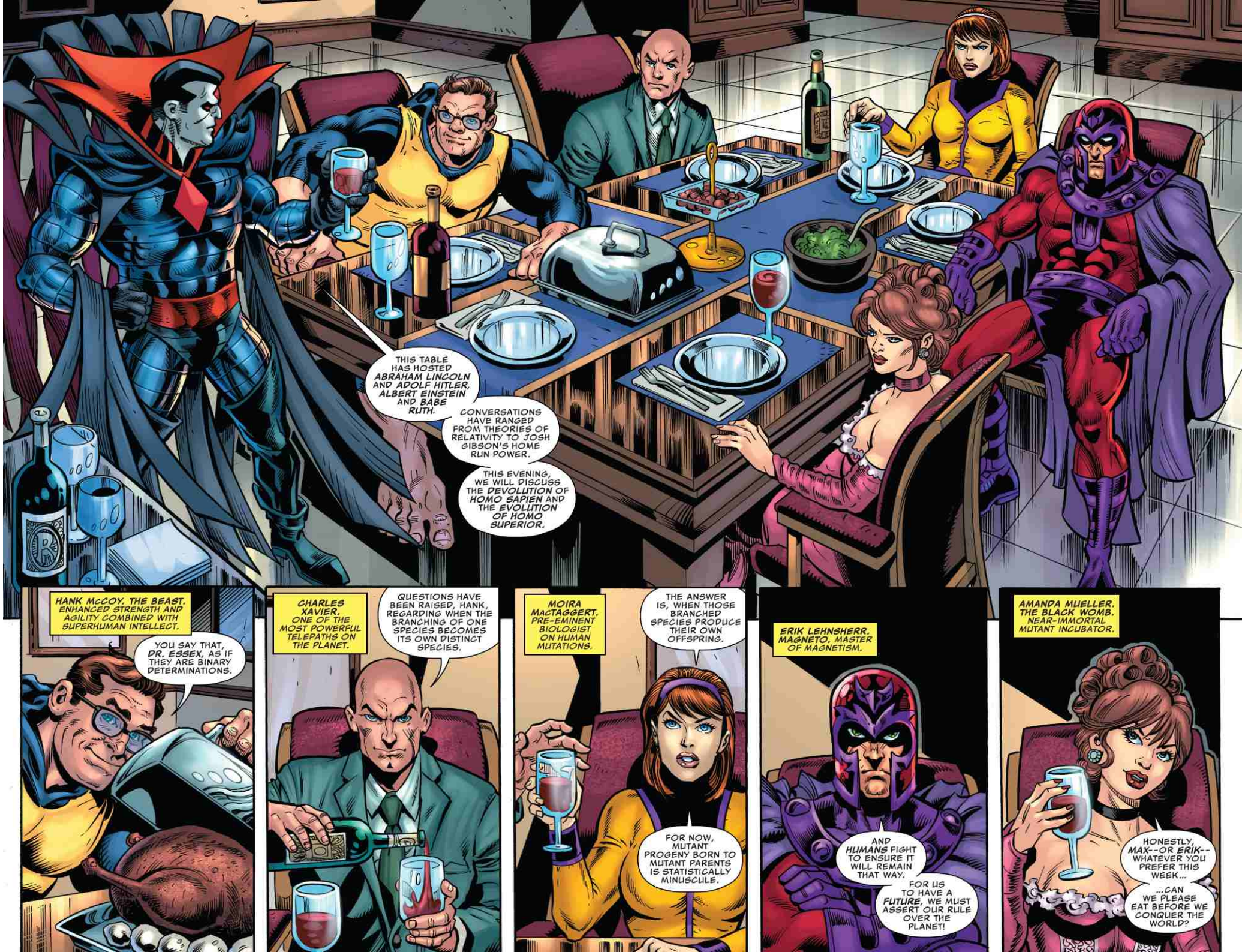
X-MEN CREATED BY STAN LEE & JACK KIRBY
THIS STORY TAKES PLACE DURING THE EVENTS OF X-MEN (1991) #34.


THIS TABLE HAS HOSTED ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND ADOLF HITLER, ALBERT EINSTEIN AND BABE RUTH.
CONVERSATIONS HAVE RANGED FROM THEORIES OF RELATIVITY TO JOSH GIBSON'S HOME RUN POWER.
THIS EVENING, WE WILL DISCUSS THE DEVOLUTION OF HOMO SAPIEN AND THE EVOLUTION OF HOMO SUPERIOR.
HANK McCOY. THE BEAST. ENHANCED STRENGTH AND AGILITY COMBINED WITH SUPERHUMAN INTELLECT.
YOU SAY THAT, DR. ESSEX, AS IF THEY ARE BINARY DETERMINATIONS.
CHARLES XAVIER. ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL TELEPATHS ON THE PLANET.
QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED, HANK, REGARDING WHEN THE BRANCHING OF ONE SPECIES BECOMES ITS OWN DISTINCT SPECIES.
MOIRA MACTAGGERT. PRE-EMINENT BIOLOGIST ON HUMAN MUTATIONS.
THE ANSWER IS, WHEN THOSE BRANCHED SPECIES PRODUCE THEIR OWN OFFSPRING.
FOR NOW, MUTANT PROGENY BORN TO MUTANT PARENTS IS STATISTICALLY MINUSCULE.
ERIK LEHNSHERR. MAGNETO. MASTER OF MAGNETISM.
AND HUMANS FIGHT TO ENSURE IT WILL REMAIN THAT WAY.
FOR US TO HAVE A FUTURE, WE MUST ASSERT OUR RULE OVER THE PLANET!
AMANDA MUELLER. THE BLACK WOMB. NEAR-IMMORTAL MUTANT INCUBATOR.
HONESTLY, MAX--OR ERIK--WHATEVER YOU PREFER THIS WEEK...
...CAN WE PLEASE EAT BEFORE WE CONQUER THE WORLD?

THEY NEED TO KNOW HOW *IMPORTANT* THIS MOMENT CAN BE.
WHAT AN INCREDIBLE *OPPORTUNITY* WE HAVE BEFORE US.
BUT ARE THEY CAPABLE OF OVERCOMING THEIR DIFFERENCES? AM *I*...?
THE FINGERLINGS ARE PLEASANTLY PIQUANT.
ARE YOU KEEPING YOUR HELM ON THE ENTIRE TIME WE SUP?
THEY DO SMELL GOOD.
IT'S THE ROSEMARY.
WHEN WE SUBJUGATE THE HUMANS, WE WILL KEEP THEIR RECIPES.
ERIK MADE A JOKE. TRULY, WE ARE IN A NEW AGE.
I'LL REMAIN A SKEPTIC UNTIL WE AT LEAST GET THROUGH DESSERT.
SO, NATHANIEL, DO YOU HOPE THE CHALLENGES POSED BY MUTANT ASCENDANCY WILL BE SOLVED BEFORE OUR FINAL COURSE?
AMANDA, WHEN LOOKING AROUND THIS TABLE, EVEN YOU MUST ADMIT...

"...THE POSSIBILITIES ARE LIMITLESS!"
NEBRASKA. TESSERACT FOLD 22-Q WITHIN SINISTER'S UNDERGROUND LAB.
THE REVEAL NEVER GETS OLD. WE RESIDE WITHIN ALL SPACE, NESTLED BETWEEN INTERSPATIAL FOLDS OF MY FOREVER LABORATORY.
IT SERVES AS BOTH MY SOLACE AND MY SECRET, WHERE I HOARD THE KNOWLEDGE I HAVE GAINED AND HIDE THE TREASURES I HAVE AMASSED.
FACTORS OUTSIDE OUR CONTROL LEAVE US WITH BUT THREE HOURS TO SET THE HUMAN RACE ON A UNIFIED PATH TO EVOLUTIONARY GLORY.
SHALL WE PROCEED?

AND YET, TWO HOURS AND FIFTY-EIGHT MINUTES LATER...
YOU ARE NOTHING BUT A *HUMAN* WITH PRETENSIONS TO POWER!
ERIK, STOP!
THAT DIDN'T GO AS PLANNED, THOUGH CERTAINLY AS EXPECTED...
XAVIER-- NOW!
I SAID STOP!
I WOULD FEAR YOUR *TELEPATHIC COMMAND* TURNED HIS BRAIN TO MUSH...
...HAD YEARS OF STUPIDITY AND FUTILITY NOT ALREADY DONE THAT.
IT WAS *ABHORRENT* OF YOU TO DESCRIBE EXPERIMENTATION ON MUTANTS AS "BREAKING EGGS TO MAKE AN OMELETTE."

CONSIDERING MAGNETO'S TRAGIC PAST, I PROBABLY SHOULD NOT HAVE DONE THAT.
BUT IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER, YOU ALL CARRY A BURDEN OF TRAGEDY, DON'T YOU?
IT INFORMS WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO.
DO YOU THINK SO, DOCTOR? I BELIEVE MANY OF YOU DO WHAT YOU DO IN SEARCH OF TRAGEDY.
AND SPEAKING OF...
...NATHANIEL, WOULD YOU CARE TO EXPLAIN THAT?
ERIK? SINISTER, WHAT IS HAPPENING TO HIM?
HE SAID WE HAD "THREE HOURS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM."
BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT'S HOW LONG OUR CLONE BODIES WOULD REMAIN VIABLE.

WE'RE CLONES?
HIS SURPRISE IS UNDERSTANDABLE. HOW WOULD A COPY KNOW IT IS NOT THE ORIGINAL?
HOW ELSE COULD CHARLES WALK?
OR AMANDA BE YOUNG AND BEAUTIFUL?
I HAVE HAD THIS DINNER WITH COUNTLESS COMBINATIONS OF MINDS I RESPECT...
...AND EACH TIME, I LEARN SOMETHING NEW.
YET EACH TIME, IT ENDS IN A DESPERATE STRUGGLE TO WATCH YOU ALL EKE OUT ONE MORE MOMENT OF EXISTENCE.
BUT STILL, I LEARN, FOR ISN'T HOW WE HANDLE DEATH AS VITAL AS HOW WE HANDLE LIFE?
WE HAVE TO HURRY, HANK.
OH MY STARS AND GARTERS, IT'S LIKE EVERY GENETICS LAB ON EARTH DONATED ALL THEIR EQUIPMENT!

SINISTER'S DATABASE SHOULD CONTAIN OUR GENOME SEQUENCING...
WE CAN USE THAT TO OVERRIDE OUR GENETIC DEGRADATION.

MISS MUELLER, WHY ARE YOU NOT HELPING THEM?
BECAUSE I ACCEPT THAT I AM NOT "MISS MUELLER."
I AM A CONSTRUCT, THOUGH WITH ENOUGH FREE WILL THAT I REFUSE TO BE A MOUSE IN NATHANIEL'S MAZE.

APOLOGIES FOR THE INTRUSION, BUT YOUR MIND MAY CONTAIN SECRETS THAT COULD HELP MOIRA AND HANK...
OH, I ASSURE YOU IT DOES, PROFESSOR.

NO.
YOU HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN...WHY...

...WHY DIDN'T YOU... EVER DO...

...MORE...?
SSSTHSSSTT

AMANDA, HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO KEEP YOUR SECRETS WHEN I MADE YOU TO REVEAL THEM?
KLEIN AND ULLSPERGER DID FIND THAT STUBBORNNESS IS GENETIC...
WHILE AT THE MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE, I BELIEVE?
DID THE TWO OF YOU KNOW MAX PERSONALLY?
OH, THIS IS NOT GOOD.
OUR LYMPHOID TISSUES WERE DESIGNED TO COLLAPSE...
A CASCADE ACROSS THE THYMUS, SPLEEN AND LYMPH NODES, LEADING TO CATASTROPHIC CELLULAR DEGRADATION.
YOU COULD HAVE PREVENTED THIS!
WHY GIVE US LIFE ONLY TO TAKE IT AWAY?
FOR THE CONVERSATION, OF COURSE, DEAR MOIRA.
YOU ARE BUT A MEANS TO AN END.

GGGRRR
RRMMM
AND IT APPEARS THE END IS NEAR.
WHAT WAS THAT?
A DISRUPTION IN THE INTERSPATIAL UMBILICAL FIELD.
WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE DISRUPTION?
YOU ARE, HENRY.
OR RATHER, THE REAL YOU, ATTACKING MY BASE ALONG WITH THE X-MEN.
I AM DISAPPOINTED TO LEARN MY SECURITY HAS BEEN COMPROMISED, THOUGH A PART OF ME IS CURIOUS...
...WHAT MIGHT XAVIER AND HIS CHILDREN ACCOMPLISH WITH ACCESS TO MY RESEARCH?
AND YES, I CAN ADMIT, A VERY JEALOUS PART OF ME SAYS, "FAR MORE THAN I HAVE."

THE DOORWAYS BETWEEN FOLDED SPACE ARE BEING CLOSED.
IF THEY SEVER THE INTERSPATIAL UMBILICAL PASSAGE CONNECTING THEM, I COULD BE TRAPPED HERE FOREVER.

FOREVER IS QUITE A GENEROUS ESTIMATE, NATHANIEL.
WHAT DOES SHE KNOW? THE VIXEN HAS ALWAYS KNOWN MORE THAN SHE REVEALS.

YOU WORRY ABOUT MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THIS TESSERACT WHILE THE REST OF US WORRY ABOUT STAYING ALIVE!

PERHAPS IF WE REARRANGE THE CYTOPLASM AND ORGANELLES TO IMPROVE THE DELIVERY TO THE LYSOSOME?
INTRODUCE A SURGE OF EXTERNAL PROTEIN MOLECULES TO INCREASE THE BINDING AFFINITY...?
MICE IN A MAZE, DESPERATE TO FIND THE CHEESE.

BUT AM I TRULY SO DIFFERENT FROM THEM?
THEY'LL NEVER OVERRIDE THE RNA SEQUENCING IN TIME.
DO NOT DISTRACT ME, WOMAN!
I AM TRYING TO CREATE A STASIS FIELD AROUND THE LAB.
EVEN IF I AM TRAPPED IN FOLDED SPACE, IT WILL BUY ME ENOUGH TIME TO FIND A WAY HOME.
HANK-- PLEASE...
TSST
I PRAY THESE RESEQUENCING NANITES WILL WORK, MOIRA...
STEP IN FRONT OF THE SCANNER, MOIRA-- CAREFUL...
...IT HURTS...
THE NANITES ARE WORKING!
MOIRA, PLEASE HOLD ON!
NO, NOT MICE.

HEROES, STRIVING THROUGH IMPOSSIBLE OBSTACLES TO SURVIVE.
HANK--?!
AND EVEN IN FAILURE, EVEN IN DEATH, I COULD ONLY ASPIRE TO MATCH THEIR COMPASSION.
I'M SORRY...
THE TESSERACT IS COLLAPSING ON ITSELF!
"WE HAVE TO COMPLETE THE STASIS FIELD OR THE LAB WILL BE CRUSHED WITHIN COMPRESSED SPACE."

IT WENT FROM "I" AND "ME" TO "WE" IN A HEARTBEAT.
I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS INSANITY!
YOU MANIPULATIVE, MALICIOUS MONSTER!
BY WHAT RIGHT DO YOU PLAY WITH LIFE AND DEATH, SINISTER?
TO SO SELFISHLY AND CALLOUSLY WASTE YOUR KNOWLEDGE, YOUR GENIUS!
YOU COULD HAVE HELPED TO MAKE THIS A BETTER WORLD!
YOU COULD HAVE BRIDGED THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MAN AND MUTANT!
YOU COULD HAVE--
--EH...?

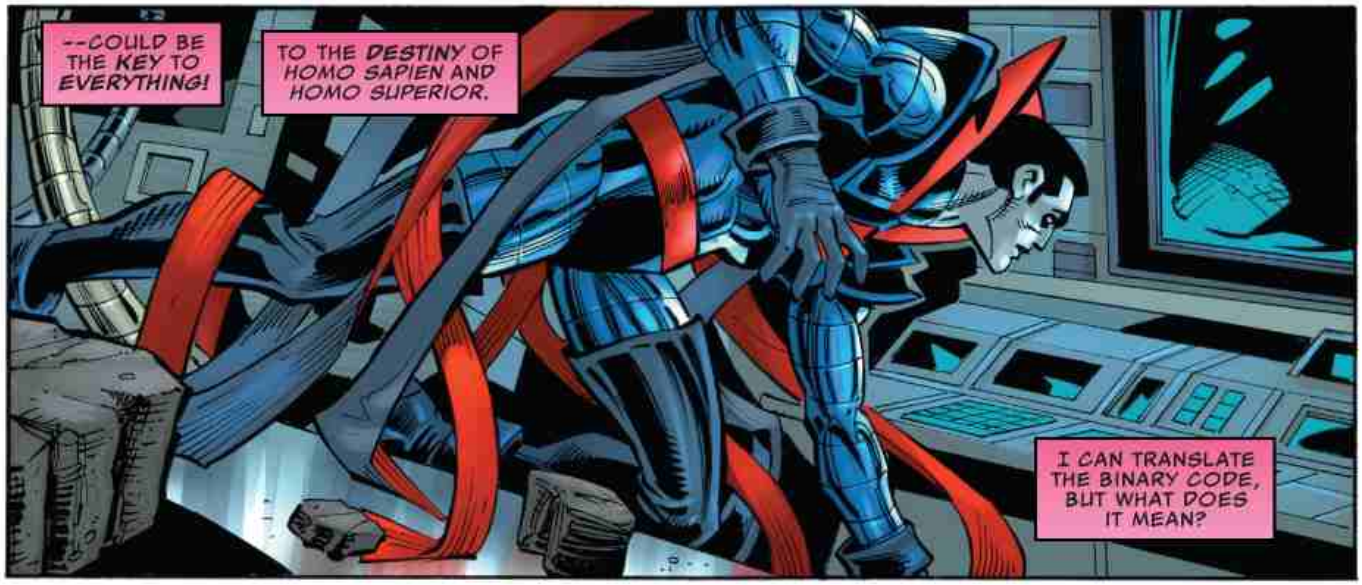
AAH--THAT WAS... UNCOMFORTABLE...

THE TRUTH ALWAYS IS, NATHANIEL.
GET UP. DUST YOURSELF OFF.
I HAVE NO DESIRE TO INHALE THE BEAST-CHILD'S ASHES WITH MY DYING BREATHS.

McCOY WAS RIGHT. YOU HAVE BEEN A FOOL.
AND YET, YOU WERE MY PUPIL, AMANDA.
WELL OVER A CENTURY AGO, NATHANIEL.

AND IN ALL THAT TIME, WHILE YOU PLAYED THE CHILDISH PART OF MAD SCIENTIST, THE MUTANT DR. MOREAU...
...I FOCUSED ON THE DESTINATION, NOT THE JOURNEY.
01001000 01101101
01101111 01101111
01010101 01101110
01101001 01110100
01110101 01100011

WHAT IS THIS, AMANDA? A HIDDEN MESSAGE IN BINARY CODE?
WAIT... THE IMAGE IS SHIFTING...
...THIS IS A LIVE-FEED FROM ONE OF MY SPATIALLY PHASED CAMERAS.
IS THAT A CLONE OF ME?
NO, SWEET HALF-WIT, THE REAL MR. SINISTER IS IN HAWAII COMBATING X-FACTOR.*
YOUR CLONING VATS-- HIS, ACTUALLY-- ARE INCUBATED IN PAIRS.
THERE WERE SIX OF US AT DINNER TONIGHT, XAVIER AND MAGNETO, MACTAGGERT AND MCCOY, MYSELF...
...AND YOU.
*SEE X-FACTOR #104-105. --BOSS BASSO.
GGRRMMMM
NO--NO, IT CAN'T BE! BUT IT IS...
...HE FRITTERS TIME AND OPPORTUNITY AWAY IN USELESS SKIRMISHES--
--WHILE THE DATA AMANDA RETRIEVED, BURIED WITHIN BLACK WOMB'S FILES ONLY SHE KNEW HOW TO ACCESS--

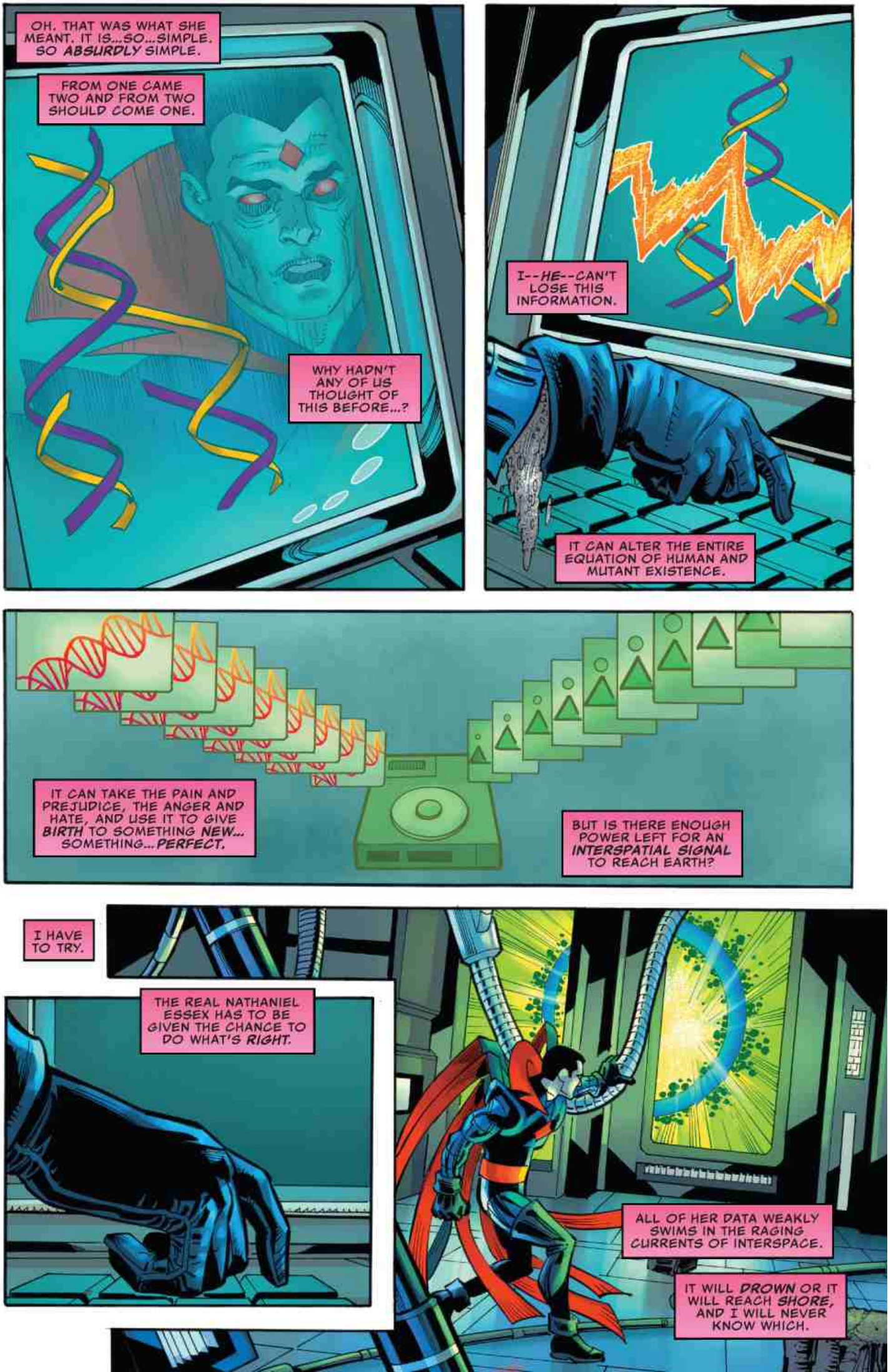

--COULD BE THE KEY TO EVERYTHING!
TO THE DESTINY OF HOMO SAPIEN AND HOMO SUPERIOR.
I CAN TRANSLATE THE BINARY CODE, BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

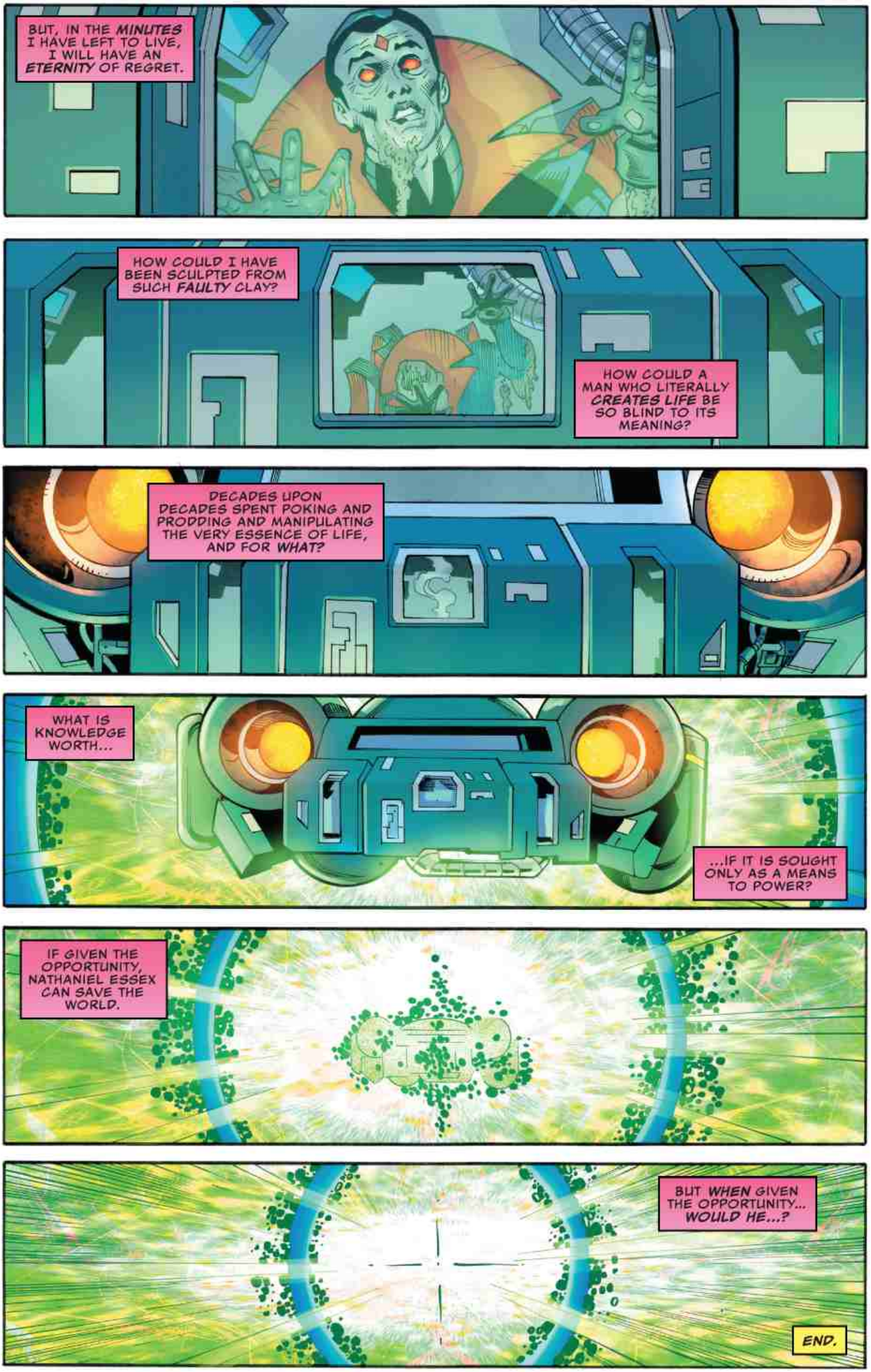
AMANDA, WHAT IS...HOMO UNITUS?
01001000 01101101
01101111 01101111
01010101 01101110
01101001 01110100
01110101 01110011
IT IS WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN STRIVING TOWARD ALL ALONG, NATHANIEL.

THE INEVITABILITY OF OUR EVOLUTION.
WHAT THE REAL AMANDA MUELLER HAS TRIED, BUT FAILED, TO ACHIEVE OVER MANY DECADES.
BUT IT REQUIRES MORE THAN YOU ARE CAPABLE OF.

IT REQUIRES... HOPE...
SSSTHSSSTT

HOPE?
THAT IS ABSURD. HOPE FOR WHAT?


OH. THAT WAS WHAT SHE MEANT. IT IS...SO...SIMPLE. SO ABSURDLY SIMPLE.
FROM ONE CAME TWO AND FROM TWO SHOULD COME ONE.
WHY HADN'T ANY OF US THOUGHT OF THIS BEFORE...?
I--HE--CAN'T LOSE THIS INFORMATION.
IT CAN ALTER THE ENTIRE EQUATION OF HUMAN AND MUTANT EXISTENCE.
IT CAN TAKE THE PAIN AND PREJUDICE, THE ANGER AND HATE, AND USE IT TO GIVE BIRTH TO SOMETHING NEW... SOMETHING...PERFECT.
BUT IS THERE ENOUGH POWER LEFT FOR AN INTERSPATIAL SIGNAL TO REACH EARTH?
I HAVE TO TRY.
THE REAL NATHANIEL ESSEX HAS TO BE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO DO WHAT'S RIGHT.
ALL OF HER DATA WEAKLY SWIMS IN THE RAGING CURRENTS OF INTERSPACE.
IT WILL DROWN OR IT WILL REACH SHORE, AND I WILL NEVER KNOW WHICH.


BUT, IN THE *MINUTES* I HAVE LEFT TO LIVE, I WILL HAVE AN *ETERNITY* OF REGRET.
HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SCULPTED FROM SUCH *FAULTY* CLAY?
HOW COULD A MAN WHO LITERALLY *CREATES LIFE* BE SO BLIND TO ITS MEANING?
DECADES UPON DECADES SPENT POKING AND PRODDING AND MANIPULATING THE VERY ESSENCE OF LIFE, AND FOR *WHAT?*
WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE WORTH...
...IF IT IS SOUGHT ONLY AS A MEANS TO POWER?
IF GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY, NATHANIEL ESSEX CAN SAVE THE WORLD.
BUT *WHEN* GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY... *WOULD HE...?*
END.

NEXT:

That Sinister is a schemer, huh? Plans within plans within plans... And hey, Apocalypse has a few irons in the fire too. Check out what he and his remaining Horsemen got up to in the aftermath of the original INFERNO in next month's issue by Louise Simonson and Walter Simonson! -- Mark

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ZONE